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ABSTRACT

A student's attitude toward the educational institution he attends may have an effect on his academic achievement there. Much of that attitude is developed in dormitories. This study attempted to investigate the effects of providing black students with a resident hall floor which would have a higher concentration of black students than was normal for the campus. Two groups of 12 black students each and 2 groups of 14 white students participated in the study. All groups were pretested on their attitudes toward dormitory living. The black experimental group that had negative attitudes toward dormitory living on the pre-test had positive attitudes on the post-test, while the white experimental group changed their attitudes from positive on the pre-test to negative on the post-test. (AF)

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A Study of Attitudes Held by Black Students Living in Residence Halls

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A Study of Attitudes Held by Black Students Living in Residence Halls

Black students approach campuses today with many preconceived notions about dormitory living, which affect their attitudes, especially in predominately white universities. Realizing, however, that experiences with regard to conditions in dormitories can serve as an agent of change in the attitudes of individuals set the framework for this study. The purpose of this work was to study the effects upon the attitudes of black students in relative proximity to one another on the floor of a men's residence hall.

Clift (1969) found that black students tend to reject the combination of factors on a white campus which would disarm them psychologically and enforce a negative self-evaluation on them. Harper (1969) found that white students do not want to be shaped by an ethnicentric education, and black students are no longer willing to accept "white washing," by a university that is irrevelant to their changing needs. Cochran (1969) stated that black people on university campuses do not seek seperate facilities for the sake of preaching racial seperatism or to create a new myth of black superiority and infallibility. They do so rather because they have too often found that the oppressive white environment prevents them from accomplishing the task they feel they must be about--the improvement of the lot of black people in every dimension, in every particular. Black students on university campuses are seeking to provide for themselves a

position of security in social and academic affairs and to preserve their own intellectual integrity.

Attitudes are probably dependent on the kinds of experiences individuals have with a given situation.

Noble (1969) stated that we have lived through one uncommitted generation but new we face an era of activism characterized by demands for participatory democracy among white student groups and for black identity among black student groups. On white campuses black students want to escape from total emersion into white values that they perceive to be alienating, materialistic and racist.

To point further the need for black students to have a facility that will provide them with a place to relax and "rap" was cited by a University of Missouri student, Tyrone Ferris (1970), "A black floor provided us with a more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere where we could be ourselves. Being in a situation of that type helped blacks to retain their whole Black identity. Besides being just as beneficial to those blacks living on the floor, the black floor provided a meeting place for other blacks on campus. Visiting black brothers had a place to come and make contact about campus activity that satisfied their life style. Blacks unfamiliar with the campus could meet and get familiar in a place where they felt welcome and were introduced to other blacks on campus."

To further emphasize the point, Wisdom and Shaw (1969) reported that the focus of blacks has changed in the past ten years.

Ten years ago it was integration, today its seperatism; then it was the south, today its the major northern university. A large number of young black students have become throughly disillusioned with the goals of integration and have adopted a posture of black identity, pride, awareness and unity. And to maintain this on major predominately white university campuses there must be a place they can retreat to and not hide their culture.

A student's attitude toward the educational institution he attends may have an effect on his academic achievement at that institution, Cochran (1969). Much of that attitude is developed in dormitories. Speculation has been that there is a positive correlation between such an attitude and a student's performance, that a poor or negative attitude may adversely affect a student's academic acheivement. Black people on university campuses do not seek seperate facilities for the sake of preaching racial seperation or to create a new myth of black superiority and infallibility. They do so rather because they have too often found that the oppressive white environment prevents them from accomplishing the task they feel they must be about--the improvement of the lot of black people in every dimension, in every particular. Black students on college campuses are seeking to provide for themselves a position of security in socia. and academic affairs and to preserve their own intellectual integrity in the midst of a white majority.

The situation in which the black student finds himself looks

totally different when viewed through his eyes, Pruitt, (1970). He feels like a stranger as he tries to enter the new world. The college must create an environment that is socio-psychologically healthy enough to allow the "scars of oppression to heal."

In light of the evidence that has been revealed, the problem persued was to investigate the effects of providing black students with a resident hall floor which would have a higher concentration of black students than is normal for the campus. The investigation seeks to answer the question: will resident hall experience which provides black students an opportunity to live together affect their attitudes about resident hall living?

Instrument

The instrument used in the study was Thurston's Successive Interval Scale as revised by Richard Caple of the University of Missouri. The title was, "Attitudes Toward Living in Residence Halls." The instrument contained forty-four items, and took approximately fifteen minutes to administer. The equivalent forms reliability coefficent range from .72 to .96.

Method

Two groups of black students numbering twenty-four participated in the study. Twelve black students lived on the same floor of a dormitory, which housed a total of forty-four, and were used in the experimental group. Twelve other black students were randomly selected from across the campus and were used in the control group. These students were primarily from metropolitan areas ranging in age from eighteen to twenty with freshman, sophomore and junior classification. However, the majority were freshmen averaging eighteen years of age.

Two groups of white students numbering twenty-eight participated in the study. Fourteen of the white students were randomly selected from the floor where the largest number of black students anywhere in campus housing were living. These students were used as the white experimental group. Twelve white students were randomly selected from other dormitories across the campus and constituted the control group. This group of students were from farms, small towns, and cities across the state. The average age was nineteen and their classifications ranged from freshman to junior.

All four groups were pre-tested at the beginning and post-tested at the end of the winter semester to determine if there was a change in attitude toward dormitory living.

Results

Although the data on attitude change could not be statistically evaluated, it does reveal a change in the attitudes of students involved in the study. The black experimental group had negative attitudes toward residence halls as indicated in pre-testing. These attitudes changed positively during the experiment, as indicated by post-test results.

White experimental students had positive attitudes about residence halls prior to the experiment, which changed to negative ones. Both black and white control groups tended to show little change in attitude towards residence halls. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Mean scores of black and white experimental and control groups before and after the experiment.

	Before	After	N
Black Control	2.21	2.26	12
White Control	2.59	2.07	14
Black Experimental	1.66	2.02	12
White Experimental	2.39	2.00	14

Discussion

The findings indicate that black students are happier when they can be close to one another in living situations. White students do not enjoy being in living situations where there is a large concentration of blacks.

There are several variables that the scale could not reveal. During the time of the study a large element of students on campus were demonstrating for inter-visitation privileges. Many of the white students in the experimental group were preoccupied with this action. The height of the Cambodian demonstrations on campus came at the time of post-testing of the groups. Very few if any black students participated in these demonstrations. The white students on the floor where the experiment was conducted tended to be early bed prone, while blacks on the floor didn't seem to come alive until after midnight. There would be no silence until three or four o'clock into the morning. The study did not consider the socio-economic background or hometown geographic location of the samples. These variables could very well have affected the findings, which further research could possibly indicate.

Conclusion

The problem, as redefined, was to see if a change in residence hall floor arrangement, allowing for a larger concentration of black students on that floor, would change their attitudes toward residence halls. The black experimental group was compared with the white experimental group in attitudes toward residence halls. The results suggest when black students are provided with an environment where they are in close proximity to one another, their attitudes tend to change positively. The white experimental group, in this study, tend to indicate that their attitudes changed negatively.

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